



Feed the Future Country Fact Sheet

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Success Spreads with Conservation Techniques in Burkina Faso



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Lead farmer Amidou Ouedraogo's conservation farming training group in front of Amidou's field in Djora, Burkina Faso.

During the 2015 rainy season, Fatoumata Ouedraogo was called away from her village for weeks to care for a sick relative. When she returned, the planting season was already underway. If she did not plant quickly, she would risk not having a large enough harvest to feed her family. Looking for a solution, she went to talk to her neighbor, Amidou Ouedraogo, who had been trained in conservation farming techniques through a project funded by Feed the Future and others. Amidou was supporting and training a group of 20 farmers eager to try the conservation farming techniques.

Amidou had explained to his fellow farmers that conservation farming is simple and would increase their crop yields while maintaining soil health so they could continue to farm their land for many years. Relying on three major methods—leaving the soil undisturbed so it does not dry out, covering it with mulch or another organic material to retain water and combat erosion, and rotating crops to maintain the nutrients in the soil—conservation farming would enable them to feed their families and sell their extra crops while also protecting their land from climate shocks and stresses. In the Sahel region, where desertification and drought have devastated fields, solutions for poor soil, insufficient rains and low crop yields caused by climate change are a challenge to rural families.

Conservation farming, a technique taught through Resilience and Economic Growth in the Sahel—Enhanced Resilience, a Feed the Future-supported project, gives smallholder farmers the opportunity to address these challenges and enhance their livelihoods in a sustainable way.

While visiting Amidou's demonstration field, Fatoumata saw for herself what the other farmers had mentioned: the extraordinary growth and strength of the sorghum plants and their greater height compared to neighboring fields. She was amazed at the differences she saw, and after discussions with other villagers trying these techniques, she said, "I will not only gaze at the field. I'm going to act and try this technology."

Her family laughed at her choice to grow crops using the new technology. But the new techniques reduced production costs and cut down on time and labor, particularly for land preparation. Fatoumata harvested two full carts of sorghum—more than she had harvested the prior year growing on a larger area. Asked whether she would use the same techniques again next season, she said, “Is this really a question to ask?”

Conservation farming is rapidly gaining momentum in her village and beyond. In the group led by Amidou, every field had a yield increase. The results quickly spread by word of mouth; 12 new conservation farming groups formed (including 10 all-female groups) in the village, each with 20 members. Ten groups also formed in a neighboring village. In Burkina Faso’s East region as a whole, 2,200 conservation farming producers harvested 1,093 tons of millet, sorghum and cowpea compared to 628 tons without conservation farming in 2015. The additional 465 tons provided on average 200 more kilograms of cereal per family.

Amidou’s first training group went on to encourage and build new training groups of their own, and he trained all 10 leaders of the all-female conservation farming groups. Six have already started to support themselves without project assistance, noting, “We work for ourselves.” With the promise of sustainable yields, increased income, and the ability to feed one’s family, this Feed the Future project is helping farmers help themselves.

This project is implemented by the National Cooperative Business Association CLUSA International (NCBA CLUSA), a trade association and international development organization that provides cross-sector advocacy, education and technical assistance to help cooperative businesses thrive.